



DRAFT
CORRIDOR INTRINSIC QUALITIES INVENTORY
RECREATIONAL QUALITIES

Highway 1 in Monterey County
along the Big Sur Coast

SLO-1-71.4/74.3

MON-1-0.0/72.3

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is one of six reports compiled for the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (CHMP). Each report effort both inventoried and documented a specific intrinsic quality of the highway corridor. The inventory of these qualities provides the foundation on which management strategies will be designed to preserve, protect and restore.

The Recreation Qualities report groups recreation activities into three themes: Touring, Educational and Contemplative, and Active Sports (defined in section 3.2). Through the inventory process it was determined that the primary recreational use of the highway corridor was for touring purposes, traveling by vehicle along the route to sightsee and/or to reach destination tourist facilities. Touring activities are complemented by Active Sports and Educational and Contemplative activities throughout the Coast Highway corridor.

This inventory is a result of information collected in the field and supplemented and described with information from secondary sources. The documented inventory elements are covered in this report by proceeding through the 13 named segments (Table B) and summarizing the most prominent features within each. For each segment, the report presents an initial thematic overview of the area in terms of its recreational qualities, and then continues with a more detailed coverage of particular recreation features within that segment. Not all features within the segment areas are covered in the text in section 3.3. However, all recreation features are noted on the Geographic Information System (GIS) database, and the maps in Appendix B.

1 PLAN PURPOSE

The Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan (CHMP) is designed to establish coordinated management of the State Highway Route 1 corridor along one of California's most treasured coastlines. The primary goal is to preserve, protect and restore the area's unique qualities while ensuring the continued safe and efficient operation of the highway. The planning area is located along a portion of the historic Carmel-San Simeon Highway from San Carpoforo Creek in San Luis Obispo County to the Carmel River in Monterey County, also known as Highway 1, along the Big Sur Coast (see Figure 1).

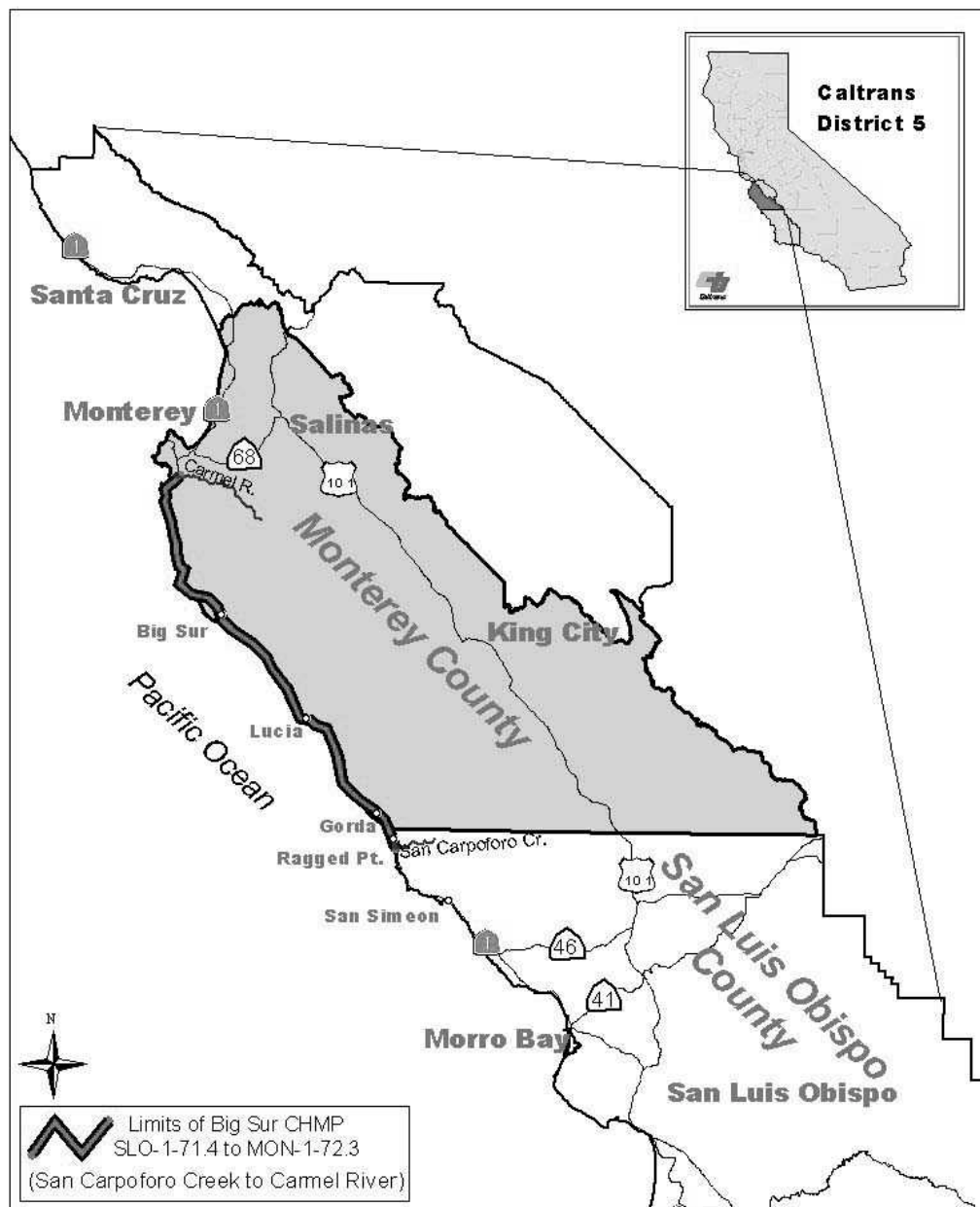


Figure 1. Map of Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan Area

The CHMP also fulfills the objectives of the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) National Scenic Byways program to update the Corridor Management Plan, originally prepared in support of the FHWA's All-American Road designation in 1996.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The ongoing natural processes that shape Big Sur's unforgettable landscape also create the greatest challenges for maintaining a reliable highway. Perched on the steep western slopes of the Santa Lucia Mountains, which face the brunt of Pacific storms, the highway requires intensive maintenance and is in an almost continuous state of repair.

Landslides and washouts of variable severity result in frequent road closures; complex repairs to restore the highway can cause further delays and extend over long periods of time. With detours nearly non-existent, Highway 1 is the lifeline to several well-established communities. It also provides access to nine state park units and the entire coastal frontage of Los Padres National Forest. Considering the highway itself is a major travel destination, closures and extended delays reverberate through the coastal communities between San Luis Obispo and Carmel whose economies are heavily dependent on recreational travel.

With rapid response to restore highway travel after an event, coordination among many parties with an interest or regulatory authority can become tense under what sometimes appears to be competing interests. Working under these circumstances can result in somewhat awkward solutions, delays and increased costs.

Meanwhile, the accumulated consequences from frequent repairs and related highway improvements have been seen as threatening the unique qualities and most sensitive resources found on this coast. Concerns about visual impacts from large cut and fill slopes, spread of invasive plants, impacts to marine and upland coastal habitats from repairs (including disposal of landslide material) and proliferation of standard highway designs have all contributed to a sense by the community that the corridor is being gradually degraded.

After a particularly harsh winter in 1998, a focused effort by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to develop a coordinated management plan was initiated in the form of the Big Sur Coast Highway Management Plan. This report is one of a series of documents prepared in support of this planning effort.

1.2 CORRIDOR INVENTORY

Fundamental to a corridor management plan is an inventory of intrinsic qualities, the unique and irreplaceable features that define the essence of the corridor. The inventory of these qualities provides the foundation on which management strategies will be designed to preserve, protect and restore.

Intrinsic qualities are categorized into six types:

- Archaeological
- Cultural
- Historic
- Natural
- Scenic
- Recreational

This report inventories and describes the recreation qualities, as defined by the National Scenic Byways Program guidelines:

“Recreational quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor’s landscape. The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences. They include, but are not limited to, downhill skiing, rafting, boating, fishing, and hiking. Driving the road itself may qualify as a pleasurable recreational experience. The recreational activities may be seasonal, but the quality and importance of the recreational activities as seasonal operations must be well recognized. (FHWA Policy 5.18.95)¹”

The inventory for the Big Sur Coast has been developed to a greater level of detail than what would normally be expected for a Corridor Management Plan. The higher level of inventory detail was included to establish a baseline recreation and public access component for the CHMP. These baseline data will support use of the CHMP by various stakeholders, including State Parks, the California Coastal Commission (CCC) and Monterey County to help coordinate corridor management activities along the coast. This inventory will be key to developing the public access component of a Public Works Plan (PWP), which it is anticipated will serve as the implementation tool for the Coast Highway Management Plan under the California Coastal Act.

Prior regional planning efforts have had an effect on the recreation features inventoried in this report: first in 1962 with the Monterey County Coast Master Plan, and more recently in 1986 when the CCC certified the Monterey County Local Coastal Program, including the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan (LUP)². Of the eight general land use categories in the LUP, two specifically address recreation: Outdoor Recreation; and Recreational, Visitor-Serving Commercial, Public and Quasi-Public Uses. Both of these recreation types are inventoried in this report.

During these planning processes, local communities and regional agencies and advocates worked diligently to guide the development of coastal and inland public access and recreation. The accepted philosophy as stated in the LUP focuses on regionally appropriate recreation that acknowledges the ecological sensitivity of the Big Sur environment, the richness of cultural and historical influences, and the need to accommodate and manage public access. The Big Sur Coast Citizen’s Advisory Committee, in providing guidance to Monterey County, stated the following as their essential planning goal:

“To preserve for posterity the incomparable beauty of the Big Sur country, its special cultural and natural resources, its landforms and seascapes and inspirational vistas. To this end, all development must harmonize with and be subordinate to the wild and natural character of the land.”³

The reflection of this philosophical tenet is embodied in the physical and cultural features of

¹ Federal Highway Administration *Byway Beginnings- National Scenic Byways Program: Understanding, Inventorying, and Evaluating a Byway’s Intrinsic Qualities*. Swimmer, Whiteman & Taintor, 1999.

² Monterey County Planning Department. *Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan: Local Coastal Program*. Monterey, CA, 1986.

³ Monterey County Planning Department. *Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan: Local Coastal Program*. Monterey, CA, 1986.

the Big Sur Coast and has affected, and continues to influence the development of recreation features along the coast. The results of this recreation quality inventory illustrate that recreation has been developing in response to this philosophy, maintaining regionally appropriate recreation and ecologically sensitive public access.

For this corridor, all resource information has been assembled into a Geographic Information System (GIS)⁴ database to help meet the larger objectives of the CHMP to facilitate multi-agency coordination and cooperation on highway-related activities.

⁴ A **Geographic Information System** provides the ability to store and view geographic information spatially; it is a computer-based application from which the mapping for this report was produced.

2 METHODOLOGY

The recreation qualities inventory covers the entire project limits of the CHMP. Lee Otter, District Chief Planner for the CCC, conducted the field work for this inventory in association with Pattillo & Garrett Associates. The inventory effort took place in the spring and summer of 2001, and was accomplished by automobile and on foot. The inventory process incorporates secondary source research via publications and Internet sites, together with direct field inventory and personal information and experience.

Though recreation associated with the Big Sur Coast Highway encompasses the area from the shore to the coastal mountain ridge high above the inland side of the highway, for the purposes of this report, recreation features were identified by their proximity to the highway corridor. The CHMP defined a total study area corridor of 400-feet (along the highway's center line), which focused the inventory effort where the greatest concentration of recreational impacts and opportunities exist. To record the inventory, the project team developed an inventory form to identify and locate recreation features along the highway. The forms were divided into two sections: *Recreation Feature*, and *Trail Attributes*. In addition to the basic inventory form, a *Comments* field was provided that allowed the inventory to document specific attributes of a feature (refer to Appendix A for sample inventory form).

Recreation Feature documented the resource name, proximity to highway, type, ownership, and attributes such as campground sites, and services provided. A recreation feature's proximity to the corridor was defined as either: Highway 1 Corridor (meaning within the 400-foot corridor limit), Entrance Only (meaning the access way to the feature met the highway), or Non-Corridor (meaning the feature is entirely outside the 400-foot corridor limit). Using these criteria resulted in inventorying the majority of coastal recreation features, both on the shore and inland. This occurred because at least the access roads or trailheads for most recreational features start at Highway 1, which comprises the vital link to virtually all other public recreational features. As well, in future database updates, the Non-Corridor designation will allow for the documentation of significant recreation features outside the 400-foot corridor, from the shoreline to the Coast Ridge divide.

Trail Attributes documented the attributes and characteristics of those features identified as trails. The emphasis on trails was in part due to the abundance of trails along the coast, and also to the physical link most trails have to the Coast Highway. Access to the majority of the area's trails requires using the highway, which functions as the region's primary "trailhead access corridor."

As the inventory process developed, a series of recreation themes came to frame the recreation qualities of the Coast Highway. Primary among these was the fact that the highway itself was the key recreation feature and that touring the highway was the region's most common recreational activity. John Brinkerhoff Jackson wrote "Roads no longer merely lead to places; they are places". As evidenced by the popularity of touring the Coast Highway, it has been and continues to be a "place" in itself. That is, the scenic highway *is* the destination.

Supporting the main theme of *Touring*, are two additional themes: *Educational and Contemplative*, and *Active Sports* (see Section 3). *Educational and Contemplative* elements derive not only from the area's dramatic landscape, remoteness, and biological diversity, but also its cultural values and renowned capacity for spiritual renewal. While destination tourism and educational elements are found in limited areas along the coast, opportunities for inspiration abound. *Active Sports* are popular in most of the region, primarily as a result of the abundance of trails and water recreation opportunities.

In addition to framing the Big Sur Coast's recreation quality in terms of theme, the inventory discussion (Section 3) describes specific recreation features of note, highlighting those that make up the intrinsic recreation experiences. For further recreation feature locations, refer to the maps in Appendix B.

3 RECREATION RESOURCES

3.1 INTRINSIC RECREATION QUALITIES OF THE COAST

The intrinsic recreation qualities along the Coast Highway that set it apart are the result of the dramatic scenic landscape and inherent isolation of the Big Sur area. Recreation opportunities are defined by the elements of this spectacular setting: precipitous mountains rising straight from the sea, an often-inaccessible rocky shoreline, cold and dangerous surf, and limited beach access, and challenging topography, both upland and along the shoreward side of the highway. For the majority of the Big Sur Coast, the roadway is the only continuously accessible route or feature, as evidenced by the numerous gaps in the California Coastal Trail (CCT). To span these gaps, hikers must use the highway shoulder as the *de facto* trail route.

The first forms of contemporary recreation along the Coast may have involved European pioneers in the latter half of the 19th century. Their travels over the wagon routes and foot trails that linked their homesteads were an early form of sightseeing and passive recreation. Though homesteading life was challenging and consuming, the early Big Sur Coast inhabitants certainly found time to explore the region simply for pleasure. Their need to traverse the rugged coastal landscape to bring goods to market and supplies to their homes gave rise to roughhewn routes that eventually led to the establishment of a coastal highway. After the turn of the century, the dramatic scenery of the Big Sur Coast and its remoteness provided the impetus for non-resident visitors to venture to the coast to travel the limited routes established by the pioneers. Destination touring was one of the first forms of recreation in Big Sur, where the dramatic scenery brought people from all over America and the world.⁵

Much of what lured early travelers to the coast was its isolated setting and unspoiled scenery. And though access was limited, not all residents were comfortable with the idea of improving local access and through travel along the coast across mostly private lands. There was a concern among some of the inhabitants that accessibility would bring an end to the isolation that drew them to the coast and helped define the character of the area. But opening up the interior of the Big Sur Coast would bring opportunity to the community in the form of tourism and recreation. As this new tourism grew and more visitors traversed the Big Sur Coast, the need arose to provide an official roadway, and in 1919, Californians voted to fund construction of The Carmel – San Simeon Highway, as Highway 1 was originally known. While various recreation resorts had already been established on the coast, the 1937 opening of the highway enabled full establishment of recreation tourism on the Big Sur Coast. For further detail on this era refer to the Historic Qualities Report of the CHMP.⁶

Recreation along the coast developed in response to both physical and social factors. The landscape of the Big Sur Coast provides a compelling and challenging setting for recreation, presenting outdoor opportunities that demand a level of skill and determination: steep and exposed rocky trails, thick brush, inaccessible beaches, pounding surf and tidal currents, a narrow winding highway with few paved pull-outs, as well as poison oak. The highway is the one refuge from this ruggedness, though as time has told, even the road is not safe from the powers of nature, as slides regularly damage the roadway.

⁵ Henson, Paul & Donald J. Usner, *The Natural History of Big Sur*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1993.

⁶ JRP Consulting Services, prepared for Caltrans District 5. *Coast Highway Management Plan: Draft- Corridor Intrinsic Qualities Inventory: Historic Qualities*. 2001.

Culture has also had a significant influence on the development of recreation, and on its quality and character. Beginning with pioneer settlers and continuing with farming and ranching families, artists and artisans, and people searching for a life away from settled areas, the character of the local residents has not been one which championed marketing or advertising the coast's recreational opportunities. This seeming disregard for boosterism reflects community values, generally favoring privacy, solitude, and serenity over publicity and profit. The area's remoteness from urban centers and the limited access to and from the highway makes traveling the coast route a serious undertaking in and of itself. Perhaps this is why the region has, historically, attracted the rugged individualist, rather than the urbanite bent on taming the wilderness.

As noted in Section 1, land use planning efforts in the 1960s through the 1980s resulted in the Big Sur Coast Land Use Plan (LUP). Through that effort a planning goal was established, which recommended a regional approach to developing recreation and public access. Key criteria included: limiting the kinds and intensity of public access (especially in areas where it could harm fragile coastal ecosystems), and limiting the visual impact of public access improvements along the highway.

After the LUP was certified, the Big Sur Coast Highway achieved further national recognition through its designation in 1996 as an *All-American Road* under the Federal Highway Administration's *National Scenic Byways Program*. The intrinsic character and quality of the Big Sur Coast's recreational resources supported its designation as an *All-American Road*, as to achieve this listing, the highway had to meet these stringent criteria:

"All-American Roads must have national significance, meaning that they must contain at least two intrinsic qualities that are not only significant on a regional level but also are recognized nationally as being unique of the most outstanding examples of their kind. All-American Roads must also be considered as a destination unto themselves—that is; they must be so distinctive that driving along the road will be the primary reason for a traveler's trip."⁷

⁷ Federal Highway Administration *Byway Beginnings- National Scenic Byways Program: Understanding, Inventorying, and Evaluating a Byway's Intrinsic Qualities*. Written by Swimmer, Whiteman & Taintor, 1999, p. 7.

3.2 RECREATION THEMES

The region's intrinsic recreation qualities are organized into three major recreation themes: Touring, Educational and Contemplative, and Active (Table A).

Recreation Themes	
TOURING	Sightseeing & Vista Points (Vehicular travel and stopping points) Dining/Shopping/Lodging (Facilities, Shops, Restaurants, Fuel) Day-Use & Camping (Picnicking and Overnight Stays) Beach Exploring
EDUCATIONAL and CONTEMPLATIVE	Nature Study (Botany, Wildlife, Geology, Oceanography) Spiritual Experiences and Retreats
ACTIVE	Hiking, Backpacking, and Trail Running Horseback Riding Bicycling (Road and Mountain Biking) Kayaking & Floating (River and Sea) Fishing (River and Sea) and Hunting Diving, Snorkeling Surfing and Wind Surfing Swimming (Rivers and Sea) Rock Climbing Soaring (Hang Gliders/Parapente)

Table A

3.2.1 TOURING

Touring, as used here, involves activities associated with traveling and sightseeing via automobile or bus. Touring the highway is the leisure activity that most typifies Coast Highway recreation and is the backbone of the local tourist economy. Due in part to the rugged physical character of the Big Sur Coast, many visitors find that touring provides them with an effective and convenient means to recreate along the Coast Highway. The majority of touring visitors emanate from the population centers of Monterey and the San Francisco Bay Area, north of the Big Sur Coast, and travel the Coast Highway in a southerly direction. This is attributed not only to the proximity of the regional visitor population, but also for out-of-state visitors these cities are travel destinations in themselves and unlike Big Sur have major chain hotels, commercial airports, and other large scale travel industry infrastructure. In any case, driving on the ocean side of the highway—southward-- affords both the best windshield views and the easiest access to roadside vistas, informal pull-outs, beach accessways and view-oriented recreation features.

The majestic scenic quality of the Big Sur Coast and its numerous wayside features makes a vehicle tour of the route engaging and satisfying. For the touring visitor, the highway is more than a roadway. It becomes a vehicle-accessible "motor trail," complete with hairpin turns, vista points, rest stops, service areas, and campsites. As evidenced by the fact that the Coastal Trail route parallels the highway (and is often obliged to use the highway shoulder) in numerous sections of the Big Sur Coast, the motoring tourist can (in a cursory way) enjoy some of the same visual experiences as the hiker.

In addition to the scenic splendor, the tourist is afforded a cultural and historical experience while traveling the route. A highway tour allows visitors to reminisce on the rich past of the region and explore the unique cultural setting that has developed within the Big Sur Coast.

3.2.2 EDUCATIONAL AND CONTEMPLATIVE

These recreational activities are typically passive in nature, or actively engage the mind more than they engage in physical exertion. Such activities may be centered on self-discovery, spiritual renewal, or increasing one's level of consciousness, perhaps involving nature or cultural studies, and contemplation. Educational activities range from scheduled studies at facilities such as the University of California's Big Creek Reserve, to spontaneous personal explorations. Contemplative opportunities are found in both personal settings and in retreats such as Esalen Institute and the New Camaldoli Hermitage. Educational and Contemplative recreation is often associated with destination tourism, where the Big Sur Coast is visited for an extended stay at either a retreat or one of the nature reserves. But, an institutional setting is not mandatory: what Big Sur has to offer can just as well be experienced strolling along a beach or quietly resting by a creekside pool.

3.2.3 ACTIVE

Though the dramatic scenery would lead one to assume that active recreation opportunities abound along the Big Sur Coast, it is the inherent drama of the landscape that has played a part in limiting the development of active recreation. Much of the coast is inaccessible and too lightly populated for the region to serve as an active recreation destination center. Traditional coastal activities such as swimming, surfing, fishing, and boating are limited by the challenging physical setting and lack of protected harbors. These limitations imbue the notion of recreation along the Big Sur Coast with a sense of wildness and adventure not found in more accessible coastal areas. Limited access and development has diffused recreation activity along the coast providing a high level of solitude for those willing to venture beyond the highway corridor and major points of interest. The Big Sur Coast holds many of its choicest active recreation opportunities as little known secrets enjoyed mainly by locals and enthusiasts.

Active recreation on the Big Sur Coast is linked to the highway itself. The highway, which for the most part parallels the shoreline, is the spine to which all recreation in the area is linked. The 75-mile length of the highway has only one east-west connecting road, the Nacimiento-Fergusson Road (P.M. 18.9). The highway's length and its lack of access points make the journey along the Big Sur Coast a major commitment. This commitment by the recreational visitor affects their perceptions of the Big Sur region and their expectations and objectives for recreation. The Coast Highway provides the sole accessway to the area's active recreation sites: State Parks, National Forest recreation lands, small-scale resorts, beaches, rivers, and trailheads. Every year, to accommodate the world-famous Big Sur Marathon, the north end of the highway is temporarily given over to runner traffic. Bicycling along the highway is another of its major activities, along with trail use. Other activities include water sports, fishing, and hunting.

3.3 INVENTORY AREA SEGMENTS

For this report, the Big Sur Coast is defined as the landform bounded by San Carpoforo Creek, in northern San Luis Obispo County, and the Carmel River, in northern Monterey County. The majority of the Big Sur Coast highway's 75 miles is located within Monterey County. The Recreational Qualities Report divides this section of the Coast Highway into 13 named

segments (Table B). They are described in this report from south to north. The typical segment is 5 to 6 miles in length, beginning and ending at an identifiable feature such as a creek or park entrance. Each segment discussion includes a physical description and notes key recreational elements. Major features such as State Parks, Points of Cultural and Physical Interest, and popular Active Recreation areas establish the hierarchy of recreation resources included in the report. Added to these features are minor elements such as secondary trails, access points, and constructed features. The discussion is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of recreation resources or a guidebook, but rather is meant to identify the intrinsic recreation qualities of the area, and highlight notable features along the highway. This discussion draws on information from the field inventory and secondary sources.

Big Sur Coast Highway Corridor Segments

Section	Corridor Segment	Southern Limit		Northern Limit	
		Begin	P.M.	End	P.M.
0	Ragged Point	San Carpoforo Creek	SLO-71.4	San Luis Obispo County/ Monterey County Line	0.0
1	Gorda Coast	San Luis Obispo County/ Monterey County Line	0.0	Willow Creek	11.6
2	Pacific Valley	Willow Creek	11.6	Wild Cattle Creek	17.3
3	Lucia Coast	Wild Cattle Creek	17.3	Lucia	23.0
4	Big Creek Coast	Lucia	23.0	Rat Creek	30.0
5	Esalen Coast	Rat Creek	30.0	JP Burns State Park	35.8
6	Partington Coast	JP Burns	35.8	Deetjen's Big Sur Inn	43.1
7	Big Sur Valley	Deetjen's	43.1	Andrew Molera State Park	51.2
8	El Sur Ranch	Andrew Molera State Park	51.2	Little Sur River	56.1
9	Bixby Coast	Little Sur River	56.1	Rocky Creek	60.0
10	Garrapata Coast	Rocky Creek	60.0	Malpaso Creek	67.8
11	Carmel Highlands	Malpaso Creek	67.8	Point Lobos	70.4
12	Point Lobos	Point Lobos	70.4	Carmel River	72.6

Table B

Post Mile markers noted within the report are within Monterey County unless otherwise noted by the SLO designation for San Luis Obispo County.

3.3.0 RAGGED POINT

SAN CARPOFORO CREEK [SLO-1-71.4] TO MONTEREY COUNTY LINE [MON-1-0.0] (MAP 1)

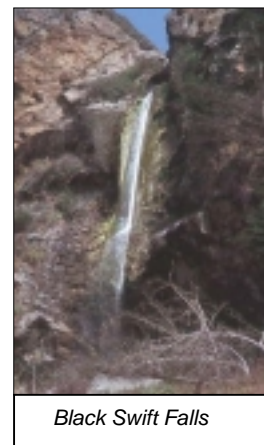


San Carpoforo Beach

The Ragged Point segment is the southern terminus of the CHMP study area, and the shortest of the 13 segments inventoried. (Map 1) South of here towards San Simeon, the Santa Lucia Mountains curve inland, leaving a broad coastal terrace along the shore. The characteristic coastal bluffs still protect the shoreline, except where San Carpoforo Creek winds its way to the sea (See Map 1). The highway roadbed is at one of its lowest elevations here, providing a close view of the surf and beach environment. At the mouth of the creek, a broad sandy beach on USFS land is accessible from the highway on a trail

through private land. This beach is becoming one of the southern Big Sur Coast's most popular surfing beaches. Moving north, the highway climbs the shoulder of the mountains to access a series of interconnected but unmarked informal trails. These trails lead to the Silver Peak Wilderness and Mount Mars through United States Forest Service (USFS) land (See Map 1). The California Coast Trail (CCT) route through this area presently follows the shoulder of the highway, and is highly exposed to motor traffic until Salmon Creek.⁸ In this segment, north and south of the county line, the lands bordering the highway and along the shoreline are a patchwork of public and private land.

Ragged Point Inn and Resort (See Map 1), a privately owned tourist facility, is situated at SLO-1-72.9. Located on a dramatic bluff forested with Monterey cypress, the Ragged Point Inn and Resort is north of Ragged Point itself, offering spectacular views of the southern coastal beach landscape towards Piedras Blancas Point, and views north to the mountainous Big Sur coastline and the Silver Peak Wilderness. The Ragged Point Inn and Resort is a complete tourist facility offering food, supplies, restrooms, shops, and lodging. The Inn offers visitors trail access to both a bluff-top trail, easy walking and partially wheelchair accessible, and a steep, challenging trail to a small dark sand beach and wispy seasonal waterfall. Both trails are privately managed.



Black Swift Falls

3.3.1 GORDA COAST MONTEREY COUNTY LINE [P.M. 0.0] TO WILLOW CREEK [P.M. 12.1] (MAPS 1, 2 & 3)

Entering the Gorda Coast, the visitor is immersed in the classic Big Sur coastal environment. Precipitous mountains rise straight from the shoreline to the highway, which is often at over 500 feet elevation, and on up to the crest of the Silver Peak Wilderness at nearly 3,600 feet. The topography in this section of the Santa Lucia Mountains is so remote, rugged and steep that much of it was never homesteaded. So, in contrast to the northern sections, more of the land has been in public ownership and is better developed with inland trail access. Coniferous forests fill the creek drainages and wind blown chaparral, including poison oak, covers the exposed ridges. The majority of the coastal and inland area of the Gorda Coast is within Los Padres National Forest, including the Silver Peak Wilderness, Southern Redwood and Alder Creek Botanical Areas.



Elephant Seals seen from Gorda bluff

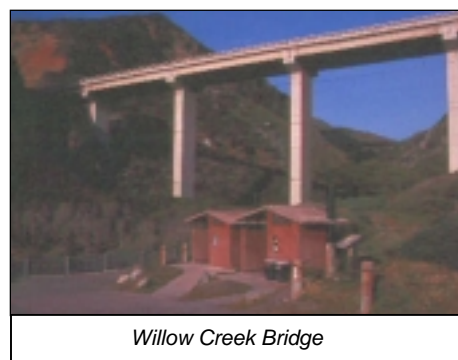
The Gorda Coast is rich in trails accessing coastal sites as well as inland and mountain areas. Several major Big Sur trails are found in this area (See Map 1): Salmon Creek Trail, which leads to a series of waterfalls and pools (the lower set visible from the highway) and which eventually

⁸ A provisional CCT route has already been (unofficially) identified in popular literature. The State Coastal Conservancy, in consultation with the California Coastal Commission is planning to identify a contiguous CCT route along the entire California Coast. Earlier, the Big Sur Coast LUP suggested a route through the Big Sur Coast area. Currently, in certain sections the trail route utilizes the highway shoulder where no trail has been developed, or moves inland to contour along the side of the coastal mountains.

reaches the Coast Ridge; Buckeye Trail, which is the route for the California Coastal Trail (CCT), parallels the coast, from the old Salmon Creek Ranger Station to Cruickshank Trail, Alder Camp and beyond; Cruickshank Trail (See Map 2), which meets the Buckeye and heads to the highway as the provisional CCT (P.M. 6.5). Once the hiker reaches the highway, it becomes necessary to follow the highway shoulder on past Willow Creek.

One of the focal points of the Gorda Coast is the lower Salmon Creek area (P.M. 2.2) (See Map 1). Both the falls and pools are major attractions, drawing visitors from the greater Big Sur Coast and beyond. Over the years the lower falls area has suffered from overuse, mainly due to its proximity to the highway.⁹ Another significant recreation feature is the Gorda Springs Resort (See Map 3). This quaint full-service touring destination and supply point includes food at the Whale Watcher Café, deli, store, lodging and fuel. Across from the Gorda store is a short, unmarked bluff-edge trail on land recently acquired by the State Coastal Conservancy.

Additional recreation features of the Gorda Coast include: Alder Creek Beach (P.M. 7.6) (See Map 2); Willow Creek Road and Beach access (P.M. 11.2 & 11.8) (See Map 3); and Treebones yurt camp, an approved (but not yet constructed) overnight camp (P.M. 11.2). Further inland, the Willow Creek Road and area trails lead to the Coast Ridge jeep road, providing mountain biking access and hang-gliding launching sites. The Willow Creek Picnic Area is available for public use though ironically no picnic tables are provided. Offshore, Cape San Martin (P.M. 11.5), south of Willow Creek, is one of the coast's scenic icons (See Map 3). The Cape is an interesting seashore wildlife viewing area, and can be accessed via an unmarked bluff-top trail.



Willow Creek Bridge

3.3.2 PACIFIC VALLEY

WILLOW CREEK [P.M. 12.2] TO WILD CATTLE CREEK [P.M. 17.3] (MAPS 3 & 4)

Entering Pacific Valley, the classic Big Sur mountainous coastal topography gives way to a broad, elevated coastal terrace, 20 to 50 feet above the ocean. The unusual grassland terrace



Pacific Valley Stile

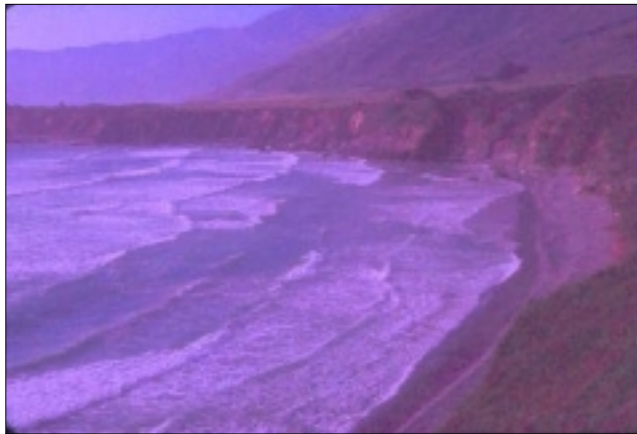
landform offers some of the region's best walking trails, open coastal views, and in the distance, the summit of Cone Peak. The western slope of Cone Peak is said to be the steepest continuous coastal slope in the continental U.S. The coastal terrace shoreline is eroded into several pocket beaches reached by steep trails. Pacific Valley's coastline and inland mountains are all within the USFS's Los Padres National Forest, except for several private inholdings upland from the coast around Plaskett and Wild Cattle Creeks (See Map 3).

The gently sloping coastal terrace has

⁹ Henson, Paul & Donald J. Usner, *The Natural History of Big Sur*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1993, p. 391

encouraged the development of upland and beach access trails, viewpoints, campsites, and day-use areas. Here, the CCT follows the bluff edge from south of Jade Cove (P.M. 13.2) (See Map 4), through Pacific Valley and past the Pacific Valley Ranger Station (P.M. 14.7), to a point north of the former Pacific Valley Store (See Map 4). Beyond there, long-distance coastal hikers must follow the highway shoulder past Wild Cattle Creek and into the Lucia Coast segment.

One of the very best features of Pacific Valley is the great freedom of movement that is possible on the open terrace grasslands. Visitors are *not* encouraged to stick to established trails. This is made possible not only by the judicious distribution of coastal access points that prevent overuse of any one area, but also by the resident cattle herd (which is well-accustomed to the presence of recreational users). Grazing suppresses the invasive brushy growth that is the



Sand Dollar Beach

bane of so many other formerly grazed lands in Big Sur. The broad coastal terrace is accessible by a series of stiles, wooden stepladders built into the roadside cattle fences to allow hikers to cross into pastures without damaging range fencing. There are nine stiles along the Pacific Valley section of the CCT.

In addition to the well-developed trail system, Pacific Valley offers many other recreation opportunities, including beach exploration and hang gliding, or hang glider watching. Jade Cove Beach is famous for the nephrite jade that can be found within the beach cobbles. Divers have claimed a 2-ton jade

boulder off the Jade Cove shore. The beach is also a designated hang glider landing site. Further north, the Plaskett Creek area (See Map 3) provides several amenities: a 4 wheel drive (4WD) access road to the inland mountains for mountain biking; a 44-site fee campground with biking and hiking trails; and a hang glider launching site. Just across the highway is the Sand Dollar overlook trail (See Map 3), a paved wheelchair-accessible path providing easy access to a blufftop viewpoint above the beach. Sand Dollar Beach (P.M. 13.85) is the longest stretch of publicly-accessible sandy beach along the Big Sur Coast. The crescent-shaped beach is popular for surfing, exploring and fishing. There is a fee picnic area with eight tables and a restroom. Other Sand Dollar area trails access the CCT as well as provide breathtaking views, including that of the 5,155-foot Cone Peak—often tipped with snow in the winter season.

Pacific Valley is also the site of the Pacific Valley Ranger Station. The Station offers no recreational services other than information, hang glider registry and water. The former Pacific Valley Store (P.M. 15.8) has not been restored since a recent fire. One and a half miles further north at Wild Cattle Creek Bridge (See Map 4), the end of the Pacific Valley segment is reached.

3.3.3 LUCIA COAST WILD CATTLE CREEK [P.M. 17.3] TO LUCIA [P.M. 23.0] (MAPS 4 & 5)

Continuing north from the Pacific Valley terrace, the highway enters another section of classic Big Sur coastal geography. At over 5,000 feet, Cone Peak and the smaller Twin Peak loom over the coast. Both of these peaks are in the Ventana Wilderness, which extends north from the Nacimiento-Fergusson Road. The first half of this segment is adjacent to the Ventana Wilderness, where it reaches the Coast, while the second half, around the tiny community of Lucia, is in private ownership.

Just north of Pacific Valley is the intersection of the Nacimiento-Fergusson Road (P.M. 18.9). This County road is a minor although interesting feature of the Big Sur Coast (See Map 4). This is the only east-west road linking the Coast Highway with the interior, between San Simeon and Carmel.¹⁰ The Nacimiento-Fergusson Road provides visitors the opportunity to enter or exit the southern section of the Big Sur Coast via the Hunter-Liggett Military Reservation. It also provides rare vehicular and mountain bike access to the crest of the coastal mountains, along the Coast Ridge Road.



Lime Kiln Beach

There are some spectacular trails accessed by this road. Among these are the Santa Lucia and Junipero Serra Peak trails, moderate walks through lovely little alpine-like valleys that were settings for Salinan Indian villages. It is a relatively wet area, with bogs and several streams. In the southern half of the Lucia Coast, trails wind through some dramatic shifts in microclimate



Mill Creek Picnic Area & Bridge

between ravines and slopes, characterized respectively by redwoods and redwood forest plants, and scrub oaks, madrones, and deerweed. Along the Coast Ridge Trail, hikers can see the indigenous Santa Lucia fir, found only in these mountains. At Kirk Creek campground (See Map 4), a popular trail route leads up to the Coast Ridge divide and the summit of Cone Peak. Once the visitor leaves the coastal public lands around Limekiln Creek, the private lands hold few trail opportunities. On the other hand, the Nacimiento-Fergusson junction area

includes a wealth of picnic and camping facilities, beach access, and ample active recreation opportunities including hang gliding (launching from nearby Plaskett Ridge, landing at Pacific Valley), diving, fishing and surfing.

¹⁰ Lussier, Tomi. *Big Sur-A Complete History and Guide*. Big Sur Publications, p. 36.

The Mill Creek Picnic Area (P.M. 18.5) and beach (See Map 4) is a favorite for surfers, photographers and anglers.¹¹ Two picnic tables overlook the ocean; a rocky path leads to the craggy shore below. . At Kirk Creek (P.M. 19.0), a formal campground provides 33 campsites, including bicycle sites. There is also a trailhead for the Kirk Creek trail that leads to the interior mountains of the Ventana Wilderness and to Coast Ridge Road. For beach access, there are two short, steep, trails leading from the campground to a rocky beach, popular with divers. Directly below Cone Peak is Limekiln State Park (P.M. 20.7), which encompasses 660 acres and has 40 sites for camping on the beach and in the redwoods. The park's state land adjoins the Ventana Wilderness and offers hiking, surfing, and fishing, as well as waterfalls and historic limekilns as sightseeing and educational destinations (See Map 5).

Beyond the area's more active recreation sites is the contemplative setting of the Immaculate Heart Hermitage (See Map 5). This self-sufficient community of Camaldolese monks offers retreats to men and women on a reservation basis. The gift shop sells their famous Hermitage fruitcake, religious artifacts, and books. For touring visitors, the Lucia Lodge offers coastal cabins with stunning views of the rugged South Coast, and a restaurant featuring al fresco dining. Provisions are also available at the grocery.

3.3.4 BIG CREEK COAST LUCIA [P.M. 23.0] TO RAT CREEK [P.M. 30.1] (MAPS 5 & 6)

The Big Creek Coast is divided into private land in the southern section and a restricted public botanical reserve in the north. The coastline in this area is rugged and inaccessible. Active recreation is limited, though touring vistas and nature study opportunities are plentiful. Lopez Point, Gamboa Point, and the spectacular multiple-arch Big Creek Bridge are the key sightseeing features. The interim CCT continues to follow the Coast Ridge Trail alignment, while the shoreline alternative follows the highway shoulder, from the Kirk Creek area to the Ventana Inn.

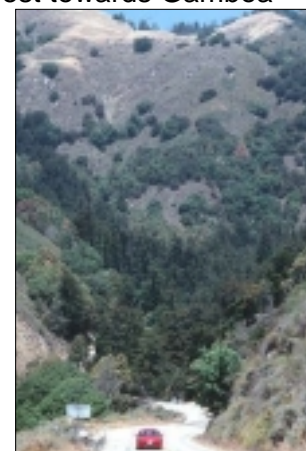


Biking along Big Creek Coast

Leaving Lucia, the highway bows out to the sea, reaching Lopez Point before heading northwest towards Gamboa Point (See Map 6). The vista at Gamboa Point (P.M. 26.0) offers

views of the old landing facilities on south side of Gamboa Point, plus a more distant vista of the beach at the Circle M Ranch, and the Big Creek Bridge.¹² Another vista point (P.M.27.3) offers spectacular views of the Bridge, Square Black Rock, and the slopes of the Big Creek Reserve. Along the way, on the highway's eastern shoulder is the Rigdon Fountain (See Map 6), a mortared rock fountain structure in disrepair that offers a visual link to the early character of the Coast Highway.

The northern half of the segment encompasses Big Creek Reserve, a unit of the University of California Natural Reserve System. Entry is by special permit, University Extension class enrollment, or Esalen



Driving for Pleasure

¹¹ <http://www.pelicanetwork.net/big.sur.Coast.htm>

¹² <http://www.bigsurcalifornia.org/beaches.html>

seminar only. The plant life in this reserve epitomizes the exceptional diversity of vegetation in the Big Sur region. In a survey of only 4,000 acres in this reserve, 344 species of plants were found, representing 42 percent of all California plant families.¹³ An established trail system within the Reserve leads to Devil's Canyon, Big Creek footbridge, Whale Hill and the ponderosa pine-covered ridge above Vicente Creek (See Map 6). There is no general public access to Big Creek Beach.

3.3.5 ESALEN COAST

RAT CREEK [P.M. 30.1] TO J.P. BURNS STATE PARK [P.M. 35.8] (MAPS 7 & 8)

This segment of the highway takes its name from the famous Esalen Institute, which in turn took its name from the original inhabitants the Esselen and Salinan Indians. The healing hot springs in this area have been visited for countless years and now are managed by the Institute and open to the public for a fee. The Esalen Coast is one of the most remote areas along the Big Sur Coast. This section of the Coast is in private ownership, except for the John Little State Reserve (See Map 7) which is a unit of the State Park System but provides no coastal shoreline access. The



Footbridge in Redwoods

interim CCT continues along the Coastal Ridge Trail alignment, well to the east of the Esalen Institute.



Picnic Table in the Redwoods

The Esalen Institute (P.M. 33.5) is famed as the fountainhead of the Human Potential Movement (See Map 7). As a non-profit institute, Esalen sponsors a full program of seminars and hosts retreats and conferences fostering alternative education, transformation practices, and restorative experiences. The original incarnation,

Slate's Hot Springs Resort, was founded in the late 1800s. Drop-in visitors are accepted at the hot springs/baths at specified late night hours. Lodging units are intermittently available when not needed for conferences/seminarians. Except as noted, all facilities are by reservation only.

3.3.6 PARTINGTON COAST

JP BURNS STATE PARK [P.M. 35.8] TO DEETJEN'S BIG SUR INN [P.M. 43.2] (MAPS 8 & 9)

Along the Partington Coast, the Ventana Wilderness boundary stays up-slope on the Santa Lucia Mountains, bordering the private and State Park lands along the highway. North of this highway segment the classic southern Big Sur Coast landscape gives way to the Big Sur Valley area and the Coast Highway finally is able to move inland to the Big Sur River. Partington Coast holds one of the Big Sur Coast's most scenic landscapes, Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park (See Map 8). Here the picturesque and much photographed McWay Creek Falls spills 80 feet

¹³ Henson, Paul & Donald J. Usner, *The Natural History of Big Sur*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1993, p. 85

from bluff edge to the beach-lined cove.¹⁴ Leading up coast from the Esalen Coast, the Partington Coast offers little shoreline and inland access beyond Julia Pfeiffer State Park. Along the highway, touring visitors are presented with incredible coastal scenery and a rich history. Anderson Landing and Partington Cove were sites of an early timbering enterprise, and some of the past is still visible.

Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park (P.M. 35.6) is named in honor of a well-respected pioneer woman in the Big Sur country who donated the land to the state. The park's 3,600 acres stretch from the Pacific Ocean to 3,000-foot ridges just below the Coast Ridge Road. Within the park are trails, waterfalls, a designated underwater park, historical features, riparian hardwood forests, and old growth redwoods.¹⁵ A panoramic view of the ocean and miles of rugged coastline is available from the higher elevations along the park's east side trails. One particularly notable trail, 1.8 miles north of the park entrance, leads across Partington Creek (See Map 8) via a wooden footbridge and through a 200-foot-long tunnel. The trail ends at an ancient hoist that originally served to transport tan bark, shakes and other forest products to waiting ships at this "dog hole" port. The picturesque Partington Cove is home to sea otters and seals, spectacularly clear waters and kelp forests. The park is available for mainly for day-use, although reservations can be made to stay at the 2 walk-in environmental campsites. Several trails lead to coastal vistas, and inland peaks. The alternate version of the provisional CCT breaks from the highway shoulder and enters the park near the J.P. Burns State Park environmental campsite trail.



Partington Tunnel



Partington Landing

surfing access route (See Map 9). Prior to entering the Big Sur Valley proper, the Coast Gallery offers the touring visitor the first of many cultural facilities that are revealed as the visitor approaches the Big Sur Valley area.

3.3.7 BIG SUR VALLEY

DEETJEN'S BIG SUR INN [P.M. 43.1] TO ANDREW MOLERA STATE PARK [P.M. 51.2] (MAPS 9 & 10)

The Big Sur Valley segment is the cultural and historic heart of the Big Sur Coast. The northern portion of this area is vaguely referred to as Big Sur Village. At Castro Canyon, the Coast Highway begins its climb to Post Summit before it turns inland to reach the Big Sur River Valley.

¹⁴ <http://www.bigsurcalifornia.org/beaches.html>

¹⁵ <http://cal-parks.ca.gov/allpages>

Here the highway and valley are protected by Pfeiffer Ridge and the shoreline is temporarily inaccessible until reaching Pfeiffer Big Sur and Andrew Molera State Parks (See Maps 10 and 11). The landscape of the valley floor is densely forested and often shady, but with much less summer coastal fog than other segments of the highway corridor. There are several inns, art galleries, shops, service station facilities, restaurants, a library, and many walking trails. Access to water recreation opportunities is enhanced by the ease of access to the Big Sur River throughout the valley. Trails are found throughout the valley's two state parks and accommodate all levels of experience.



Trailhead at Pine Ridge Trail

Highlights of the Big Sur Valley cultural features include: the rustic Norwegian-style Deetjen's Big Sur Inn (20 rooms) nestled in the redwoods of Castro Canyon (P.M. 43.1); the nearby Henry Miller Memorial Library; Nepenthe Restaurant and the Phoenix Shop; Hawthorne Gallery; Post Ranch Inn; and Ventana Inn and Campground. Additional visitor accommodations and services are found at Big Sur Center, the Loma Vista Café, Big Sur Lodge, Glen Oaks and Ripplewood Resort, Fernwood, and the River Inn complex, as well as several commercial campgrounds on the banks of the Big Sur River .

Trail access is well developed and includes a trailhead to the Coast Ridge Trail (P.M. 44.3), which is the starting point for the southbound traveler on this section of the CCT. Parking is available at "Cadillac Flat", just a short distance inside the Ventana Inn entrance. Other hiking opportunities include inland trails such as the USFS's Pine Ridge Trail and Mt. Manuel Trail.

Sycamore Canyon Road is the primary public access route to the ocean. It leads to the spectacular Pfeiffer Beach (USDA-Forest Service fee area). The single-width roadway winds through redwood forests and past wind-stunted sycamores to a concessionaire's fee kiosk, parking, restrooms, and a beach access trail. Past the turn-off to Sycamore Canyon is Pfeiffer-Big Sur State Park (See Map 10). Pfeiffer Big Sur is a large 821-acre park with 218 campsites and full services set in a redwood grove along the banks of Big Sur River. Though inland from the ocean, access to the shoreline is possible via Sycamore Canyon.



Floating on Big Sur River

Two camping areas are set aside for bike-in/hike-in campers. Nature trails, campfires, amphitheater, and other interpretive features plus swimming and floating in the Big Sur River are all popular here.¹⁶

The Big Sur River itself is a year-round water recreation corridor (See Map 10). Activities vary with the season: winter—steelhead fishing, spring—whitewater kayaking and canoeing, summer—swimming, tubing, and lounging, fall—wading/walking at low water, photography (fall color), and birding. Within the upper Big Sur Valley, the majority of the river corridor is within State Park lands. In the central section, the river flows through many private holdings, with access being

¹⁶ Schaffer, Jerry P. *Hiking the Big Sur Country – The Ventana Wilderness*. Berkeley, CA. Wilderness Press, 1988, p. 129

limited to the area within the stream banks. In this area, a variety of commercial resorts and campgrounds do provide access to the river.

3.3.8 EL SUR RANCH

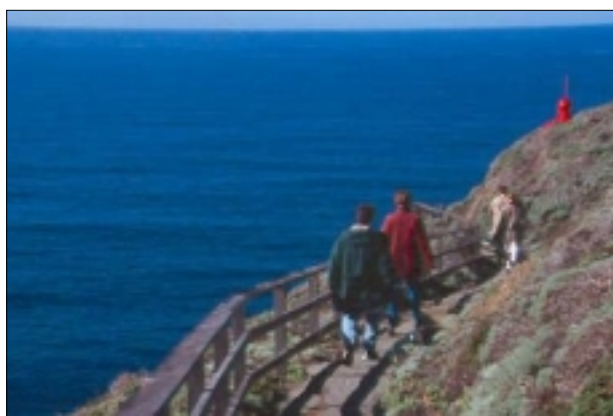
ANDREW MOLERA STATE PARK [P.M. 51.2] TO LITTLE SUR RIVER [P.M. 56.0] (MAPS 10, 11 & 12)

Descending through the sheltered Big Sur River Valley, views from the Coast Highway open out to a broad coastal terrace that holds the largest of the Big Sur Coast's state parks, ranch lands, and a former naval facility. As the route leaves the forested Big Sur River Valley, the landscape transitions to an open, wind-swept grassland, marked with ranch fencing and riparian vegetation within ravines cutting across the terrace to the coast. Out on the terrace, the highway sets back a quarter to a half mile from the sea bluffs, and the typically winding roadway alignment straightens until it passes Point Sur (See Map 11). Point Sur is the memorable feature of this segment. The dome-shaped rock, extending out into the sea from brilliant white sand beaches and dunes, has historically been one of the Coast's most dangerous maritime hazards. The majority of the shoreline and uplands lie in private ownership, and as a result much of the land outside the State Park is inaccessible. The interim CCT alignment, after following the coast through Andrew Molera State Park, leaves the ocean and travels the roadbed of the Old Coast Road, which is also generally accessible to mountain bikes and high clearance motor vehicles during the dry season(P.M. 51.2).



Pt. Sur State Historic Park entrance

Andrew Molera State Park (See Map 11) is a diverse landscape of 4,800 acres that straddles the Big Sur River where it empties to the Pacific. Andrew Molera is a coastal favorite for active sports and educational and contemplative recreation. The park is managed for naturalness and provides abundant opportunities for wildlife observation including off-shore whale watching. The California Department of Parks & Recreation is restoring native grasses to reclaim a major aspect of the park from its dairy farming past. The Ventana Wilderness Society Research and Education Center was established in the park in 1992, inspired by the desire to reach out to the public with environmental education programs. A historic pioneer home of the large dairy enterprise is now headquarters to a horse rental business. A variety of interesting trails, river and ocean water access, and a 50-site walk-in campground are open year-round (P.M. 51.2).¹⁷



Hiking along trail to Pt. Sur Lighthouse

A variety of interesting trails, river and ocean water access, and a 50-site walk-in campground are open year-round (P.M. 51.2).¹⁷

On the way to Point Sur is the old Point Sur Naval Facility (P.M. 53.8). This former U.S. Navy oceanographic monitoring station has been transferred to State Park administration, but is

¹⁷ http://www.surCoast.com/post_m.html

currently closed beyond the phone booth and bus stop, awaiting the planning process that will determine its future use (See Map 11). Beyond the former naval facility and to the north of Point Sur are exquisite white sand beaches and dunes, which are not available for public use at this time. Point Sur Lighthouse and its supporting light station buildings, now a designated structure on the National Register of Historic Places and a State Landmark and Historic Park, stand atop a dramatic off-shore volcanic rock (P.M. 53.8). Built in 1889, the historic lighthouse that was an aide to navigation now uses a modern aero-beacon to continue guiding ships along the treacherous Big Sur Coast. Point Sur can be visited year-round, by guided tours only.¹⁸

3.3.9 BIXBY COAST

LITTLE SUR RIVER [P.M. 56.0] TO ROCKY CREEK [P.M. 60.1] (MAP 12)

The Bixby Coast area returns the touring visitor back to the classically steep Big Sur landscape. From Point Sur the highway enters the Little Sur River drainage and begins a demanding and



Bixby Bridge

winding route along the steep face of Sierra Hill (elev. 1,545'). The exposed slopes of the coastal hills are chaparral covered and plunge dramatically to the ocean from the highway. This segment offers only a few individual attractions beyond enjoying the scenic quality of the touring experience. Public lands, access and trails are all limited in this area. The interim CCT route follows the Old Coast Road on the east side of Sierra Hill and meets the Coast Highway at Bixby Bridge, where it continues along the highway shoulder (See Map 12).

First among these individual attractions is the improved Hurricane Point viewing area (P.M. 58.0). This is the highest point along the Coast Highway, and takes its name from the predictable high winds. In a pair of paved pull-outs, about two dozen vehicles can be accommodated with entrancing views of the ocean and a lower terrace bluff. Further north, the Brazil Ranch (P.M. 58.9), established by the pioneer Brazil family and previously owned by celebrity Alan Funt, is now in the process of acquisition for addition to Los Padres National Forest. The ranch lands encompass scenic Sierra Hill, Hurricane Point, and the redwoods along Bixby and Sierra Creeks, and several existing farm roads and trails, including an underpass beneath the highway for a trail to the Hurricane Point terrace (See Map 12). However, public access improvements will have to await completion of land acquisition and the future planning process.

The major landmark of the segment, and even of the Big Sur Coast, is arguably the often-photographed Bixby Creek Bridge (P.M. 59.5). The concrete arch spandrel bridge is one of the longest in the world, 260 feet high, and over 700 feet long. Spectacular views are provided by a paved highway pull-outs on the north side of the bridge and from observation alcoves on the bridge itself (See Map 12). Just past the bridge is the northern entry point of the Old Coast Road, where one can see the historic roadbed used before the construction of the bridge.

¹⁸ <http://www.montereymediainfo.org/Towns/BigSur/BigSur4.htm>

3.3.10 GARRAPATA COAST**ROCKY CREEK [P.M. 60.0] TO MALPASO CREEK [P.M. 67.8]
(MAPS 12, 13 & 14)**

Rocky ocean bluffs, coupled with an elevated roadway and steep interior mountains typify this segment. The sharply cut granitic rock bluffs afford unlimited coastal views. The reaction of the coarse-grained rock to natural erosive elements over the years is responsible for the characteristic rugged cove coastline of this area. Numerous off-shore rocks and islets are found in this section of the Coast. Within a mile of crossing Bixby Bridge the northbound traveler crosses Rocky Creek Bridge (See Map 13), a similar but smaller version of the Bixby Bridge. Rocky Point Restaurant (P.M. 61.9) offers tourists a stopping point before reaching the Carmel Highlands area.



Garrapata State Park - Soberanes Point



Garrapata Historic Bridge

Through this segment the landscape to the east remains steep and mountainous while the ocean side landform benches out to form a narrow coastal terrace with a precipitous bluff-edge shoreline. Coastal views are interrupted by two residential enclaves, and the typically chaparral landscape is sporadically planted with Monterey cypress and eucalyptus. North of Garrapata Creek and Lagoon (P.M. 62.9; 63.1) several trails lead to a public beach, which has a dangerous surf condition. At Granite Canyon (P.M. 62.9,) an informal trail leads to a local rock climbing area. Several excellent sections of the CCT have been completed along the bluff edge in Garrapata State Park (although certain existing CCT links within the park were discovered to be abandoned or neglected during the course of the inventory work).

Garrapata State Park (P.M.66.0) is a day-use only park extending from Garrapata Beach northwards, spanning Soberanes Creek and Point (See Map 13), and finally curving inland past the former Victorine Ranch to encompass the redwood forest along upper Malpas Creek. The park has two miles of beach front, with coastal hiking and a 50-foot climb to a beautiful view of

the Pacific from atop the Soberanes Point knoll. With 2,879 acres, the park offers diverse coastal vegetation with trails running from ocean beaches into dense redwood groves. (See Map 13) Several side trails lead to fine bluff-edge viewpoints and access to ledges suitable for fishing. The park also features outstanding coastal headlands at Soberanes Point, and the scenic Lobos Rocks offshore. Sea lions, harbor seals and sea otters frequent the coastal waters and California gray whales pass close by during their yearly migration.¹⁹

¹⁹ <http://cal-parks.ca.gov/allpages/>

3.3.11 CARMEL HIGHLANDS**MALPASO CREEK [P.M. 67.8] TO POINT LOBOS [P.M. 70.4]
(MAP 14)**

Carmel Highlands is a predominantly residential area that marks the end of the true wild coast. Residences are now found with regularity on the ocean side of the highway, many with formal entry gates.²⁰ Access to the shoreline and inland hills is limited, though views of the surrounding landscape and ocean scenery are still available. As Carmel Highlands proper is approached, two side roads lead off the seaward side of the highway, Yankee Point Drive, and Spindrifft Road. Recreation features are few until reaching Point Lobos State Reserve (See Map 14).



Carmel Highlands General Store



Carmel River State Beach

Notable features of the segment include: the Malpaso Beach trail (P.M.67.9), an unmarked beach access path that provides a view of the Malpaso Creek historic bridge and the southernmost extent of the native stands of Monterey pine in the Monterey Peninsula area; Wildcat Creek Bridge and pedestrian sidewalk (P.M. 69.0), an excellent canyon and ocean vantage point; and the Highlands Vista Point and the Highlands Inn complex (P.M. 69.4).

3.3.12 POINT LOBOS**POINT LOBOS [P.M. 70.4] TO RIO ROAD [P.M. 72.6]
(MAP 14)**

Point Lobos is the jewel of the northern and final segment of the Coast Highway Management Plan study area. It includes both the Point Lobos State Reserve and Carmel River State Beach. Sited between Carmel Highlands and Carmel, these public lands, while affected by the neighboring residential developments, have preserved significant open space and habitat for both terrestrial and aquatic species. The landform is a gentle coastal terrace rising just above the ocean. Native stands of Monterey pine and Monterey cypress cloak the Point Lobos area, while scenic open uplands, coastal bluffs, and a series of sandy beaches characterize the Carmel River State Beach (See Map 14).

²⁰ Public Affairs Management. Prepared for Parsons Brinckerhoff, for submittal to Caltrans. *Coast Highway Management Plan: Draft Scenic Qualities Report*. 2000.

Point Lobos State Reserve (P.M. 70.4) is 1,276 acres of protected forested headlands, with restricted day-use limits. The Reserve offers countless opportunities for educational, contemplative, and active recreation pursuits. In 1960, the waters off Point Lobos were designated the country's first underwater marine reserve. As a result, it is one of California's premier diving areas. Both maritime and terrestrial species thrive in the Reserve, which includes 300 plants and 250 birds, animals, and mammals. Wildlife includes seals, sea lions, sea otters and migrating gray, humpback, and blue whales (December to May). Thousands of seabirds make the Reserve their home.

Little remains from the area's turn-of -the-century whaling and abalone industry, except a small cabin of the era that still remains on Whaler's Cove. Hiking trails follow the shoreline and lead to hidden coves, and are linked by a six and one-half mile perimeter trail. The Reserve is outstanding for sightseeing, photography, painting, nature study, picnicking, scuba diving, and jogging. In addition to the spectacular beauty, nearly every aspect of its resources is of scientific interest. There are rare plant communities, endangered archeological sites, unique geological formations, and extraordinarily rich flora and fauna of both land and sea.

Adjacent to the northern boundary of Point Lobos is the Carmel River State Beach (P.M. 71.4). The southernmost part of the sandy beach, called Monastery Beach, lies parallel to the highway and can be accessed directly off the Coast Highway. Other sections of the beach are accessed off Ribera Road and (beyond the Big Sur Coast corridor) Scenic Road. Surf conditions are very hazardous, but the area is nonetheless quite popular with divers due to spectacular underwater scenery—including the head of the Carmel Submarine Canyon. There is no access to Point Lobos from the beach. Across the highway from the State Beach is the historic and visually interesting Carmelite Monastery, founded in 1925.



Roadside path along Highway 1 at Point Lobos State Reserve

Bracketing the north end of the Big Sur Coast corridor is the Carmel River, which once featured a spectacular annual steelhead run—now severely and sadly depleted. The river corridor is locally utilized during the winter for floating, in the summer for horseback riding and birding. Two unmarked trailheads, one on each side of the highway, provide access to the river, leading under the highway bridge from the north side. The adjacent Carmel Crossroads shopping complex provides a full range of visitor services and overnight lodgings, as well as a terminal point for the Amtrak shuttle bus and MST transit bus services.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The inherent drama and richness of the Big Sur Coast landscape, and its distinctive cultural character have combined to provide recreationists with a distinct set of opportunities. Supported and accessed via the Coast Highway, the Big Sur Coast offers a wide range of recreational activities in the Touring, Educational and Contemplative, and Active use categories. Traveling north through the study segments, the Coast Highway transitions from wild and inaccessible to ruggedly civilized and back again. Throughout its length it exhibits incredible physical diversity, scenic splendor, and unparalleled recreational opportunity.

Development of recreation along the Coast Highway is unique to the region. It is founded and limited by the physical characteristics of the Coast: its mountains meet the sea landform, and by its cultural antecedents, from the pioneers to the artisans and road builders. Recreation development has had a light touch on the land as the result of these characteristics and constraints, and the fact that the Big Sur Coast is still distant from urban centers. As a result, while the touring visitor has a continuously and consistently rich visual journey, one still finds long stretches of the coast without services or recreation features. These characteristics are what imbue the recreation quality of the Coast Highway with its distinctive character: wild, remote, and memorable.

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Appendix A
Sample Inventory Form

Appendix B
Mapping